

DD 457

U.S.S. EMMONS

DMS 22



Volume XXXV, No. 1

USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

March/April 2023

In This Issue

- 2023 Reunion
- Battle Star Controversy
- Past Scholarship Recipients Where Are They Now?
- *Emmons* Family Contacts
- Memorial Contributions

2023 REUNION

Baltimore, MD
September 28 - October 1

Registration information is coming in April and will be available on our website at:

www.ussemmons.org

USS CONSTELLATION AWAITS EMMONS FAMILY!

The Navy's 1855 Sloop-of-War to host our annual memorial service.

Come for some or all 4 days of the 2023 USS Emmons Family Reunion, September 28 - October 1. We welcomed 27 first-time attendees at our last two in-person reunions and we hope to include YOU in that count this year!

Hosting our reunion this year will be the Sheraton Baltimore-Washington Hotel - BWI. The close proximity to BWI airport allows for free airport shuttle service.

Inner Harbor Visit

Guests will begin to arrive Thursday with the hospitality room opening at 4PM. Friday morning, we'll venture out to Baltimore's Inner Harbor. There we'll have time to explore the historic waterfront's attractions, tour the USS *Constellation*, the U.S. Navy's sloop-of-war commissioned in 1855, and enjoy lunch together.

While aboard the *Constellation*, we'll honor the lost shipmates with our annual memorial service. An afternoon program and evening buffet dinner will await us when we return to the hotel.

A brief Saturday morning meeting of the membership will allow for plenty of free time to sightsee the remainder of the day until our evening banquet program, highlighted by the opportunity to meet and hear from our 2023 Griffin/Emmons Scholarship recipients.

Sunday morning's buffet breakfast will allow for goodbyes until next year. As always, the hospitality room will be open throughout the weekend.

A block of guest rooms has been set aside at a reduced rate of \$129+tax. Watch for the registration information coming in April and watch our website's [Reunions page](#) for updates.

EMMONS BATTLE STAR CONFUSION RESOLVED

For more than 70 years, the question existed, "How many battle stars is the USS *Emmons* entitled to?"

Authorized by the Chief of Naval Operations, those "battle stars" are WWII Service Stars issued to Navy warships for meritorious participation in battle.

Baxter Billingsley's book, *The Emmons Saga*, cites five battle stars; however, the Navy's official publication, *The Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (DANFS) cited only four. DANFS, published in eight hardcover print volumes, is also now available online. The publication cited only the following four battle stars:

1. North Africa, Algeria-Morocco Landings
2. Invasion of Normandy (including Cherbourg)
3. Invasion of Southern France
4. Okinawa Gunto Operation

It was understood that long after those four battle stars were recognized, the *Emmons'* Mediterranean Submarine Assessment was also recognized; however, the DANFS online records still listed only four. Our inquiry in 2016 revealed Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHHC) had started a project of updates and corrections in 1991 that was moving along very slowly.

As of early 2022, DANFS still listed only four battle stars, so retired USN Captain and grandson of shipmate Thaddeus Tenerowicz, Chris DEGREGORY, personally reached out to NHHHC to inquire. A month later, nearly 77 years after her sinking, the Navy's DANFS was updated online to properly reflect her five battle stars. The Emmons Association is grateful for Chris' efforts in getting the Emmons and her crew the recognition they earned.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

This third part of our series on past Griffin/Emmons Scholarship recipients features 2015 recipient Chris CIPARELLI, grandson of Armand J. JOLLY.

Since receiving the scholarship, Chris has completed his master's degree in Educational Technology through the University of Saint Joseph. Currently, he is teaching at Bethel High School, now in his 18th year, with hopes to stay there in the classroom until retirement. In the meantime, he is looking at working toward another masters degree in either history or curriculum instruction.

Chris expressed how much being awarded the scholarship meant to him and his family, helping him further his education and become a better educator, which has been the "family business" for generations. He contin-

ued that receiving it from his grandfather in the presence of his parents, all of whom are since deceased, was a moment that he'll always cherish.

Asked if there's anything he'd like to share with others considering applying for the scholarship, he stated, "*The Emmons Association is an amazing organization that looks to continue the legacy established by the officers and crewmen of the USS Emmons. By taking part in the scholarship program, you are becoming part of that legacy and helping to keep the memory of these brave individuals alive.*"

Chris and his wife Katie live in New Milford, Connecticut, with daughter Thea (age 9) and twin sons Arlo and Rhys (age 7).

CONNECTING WITH EMMONS FAMILY MEMBERS

Our family continues to grow as descendants of the shipmates reach out to learn about their loved ones.

Valerie McCURRY recently contacted us inquiring of anyone who may have known her uncles, Thomas and William McCONNELL, brothers who lost their lives aboard the *Emmons*.

We promptly put her in touch with shipmate Grover McMICHAEL, who knew both brothers. Valerie wrote back to let us know she and Grover spoke for over an hour and how much she enjoyed talking with him.

In the meantime, Valerie provided us with our first photos of both Thomas and William, which are now included in our website's photo archive. Thanks Valerie!

We also heard from Ross Elliott HAGSTOZ, whose first and middle names are in honor of his uncle, Ensign Ross ELLIOTT, who we all know was awarded the Navy Cross, having

sacrificed his life for the lives of five of his men at Okinawa.

Laurie CORNETTA recently purchased a survivor accounts book for her father, whose brother, Edwin J. CORNETTA, served aboard the *Emmons*. Laurie is the first we've heard from Edwin's family.

We also heard from Jim FOUST, son of James D. FOUST, and Shawna DEMBRO, granddaughter of shipmate Earl HOBART. Both were the first we've made contact and both provided us with our first photos of James and Earl, now included with our photo archive.

We're also happy to welcome Wayne KOHL, grandson of Cleo R. KOHL, and Abner ROSIER, great grandson of William NIX, both shipmates who gave their lives at Okinawa. Wayne and Abner also provided us with our first photos of their loved ones.

And early last year we heard from Tom METGER, nephew of Charles T.

COWLEY, who recalled attending the 1994 Virginia Beach reunion, and Donna WILCZEWSKI-GUZ, who provided us with our first photos of her father, John P. WILCZEWSKI.

APPLICATION DEADLINE DRAWS NEAR FOR GRIFFIN/EMMONS SCHOLARSHIP

\$5000 in academic scholarships will once again be awarded for the 2023-24 academic year. The application deadline is May 31st.

Those who qualify include direct lineal descendants of Emmons shipmates, as well as direct lineal descendants of siblings of childless shipmates who gave their lives aboard the Emmons at Okinawa. For information, visit our website at www.ussemmons.org.

2023 MEMBERSHIP DUES: Dues remittances continue to arrive as Treasurer Tom HOFFMAN extends his appreciation to all who have supported us by submitted theirs so far. If you haven't yet submitted yours, it's not too late. \$25 individual/\$40 for couples/\$5 junior membership (18 yrs. + under). Checks payable to the USS *Emmons* Association may be sent to USS *Emmons* Association, 36078 Huntington St., Millville, DE 19967. You may also remit membership dues online at our website's [Membership page](#).

IN MEMORIAM

CHARLES J. BONHAGE We received word from daughter Colleen of the passing of her father, Charles Bonhage, brother of shipmate Joseph F. Bonhage, who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country aboard the *Emmons* at Okinawa.

Charles, himself a submariner in the Navy reserves, was a long-time, avid supporter of the *Emmons* Association as evidenced, among other things, by routinely being the first to remit his membership dues each year.

Ten years younger than his brother Joe, Charles shared with us how he came home one evening to find his sister was at home by herself when the Western Union notice arrived regarding Joe's death.

Charles passed away August 21, 2022 at the age of 91.

Now HEAR This !

Having already placed audio and video interviews of the *Emmons* shipmates with the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project several years ago, Jim KORNEY is now in discussion with personnel at the National Museum of the Pacific War, in Fredericksburg, Texas, regarding their Veterans Oral History Collection.

It is our hope the museum will accept those same interviews as we work to preserve these first-hand accounts and further our mission of sharing the *Emmons* story and that of the sailors' WWII experience.

* * * * *

Of the 60 shipmates who made the ultimate sacrifice aboard the *Emmons* at Okinawa, the Association has had contact with less than 40 of their families. The *Emmons* Legacy Committee is interested in tracking down those missing *Emmons* family members to let them know they're in our thoughts.

Stepping up to offer his time to do the research necessary to start that search was Michael OTTO, cousin of lost *Emmons* shipmate Warren P. OTTO. In a short time, his internet research using Census Bureau and Navy Department records, newspaper articles, cemetery records and

more, has already uncovered family information for several shipmates the Legacy Committee will follow up on. Well done Michael!

* * * * *

Our USS *Emmons* challenge coins have been a blessing for our memorial scholarship program. In the nine years since they were first made available as a scholarship program fundraiser, their sales here in the states have raised over \$4,200 and accounts for much of the \$17,000 Kurt REESE and Chuck DeCESARI raised over the years in Okinawa.



The idea for the challenge coins came about in 2013 when Dennis YECKE proposed his idea to shipmate Ed HOFFMAN of creating the coins to be sold as a fundraiser with all proceeds going to the scholarship fund. Working together, Ed and Denny designed the coin as we see it today.

As a memorial to Denny's uncle,

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The USS *Emmons* Association respectfully acknowledges the following gifts received:

In Memory of Anthony Di Rubbio

Lillian Di Rubbio Harrington

In Memory of Paul F. Dodd

Ann & Tom Short

In Memory of Capt. & Mrs.

Eugene N. Foss

Paul & Karen Foss

In Memory of David, Gerald &

Leon Horwitz

Jeffrey Horwitz

In Memory of Edward I. Kurtzman

Daniel Kurtzman

In Memory of Russell H.

McCullough, Jr.

Russell H. McCullough

In Memory of Donald Yecke and all shipmates who gave their lives aboard the *Emmons* at Okinawa

Dennis & Cheri Yecke

Donald YECKE, who gave his life at Okinawa, Denny and his wife Cheri have personally covered the cost of all 1500 coins purchased to date. Their generosity and thoughtfulness will continue to touch the lives of *Emmons* family students for generations.

The coins are available at our website's [Ship's Store](#).

* * * * *

And speaking of Kurt & Chuck, they continue to update us on the condition of the ship, most recently regarding the effect of typhoons that passed through last fall.

Kurt tells us, "*The hole in the port bow continues to enlarge itself and what was probably a below decks medical storage supply area continues to get "flushed out" and reveal medical supplies, namely glass bottles of various sorts.*"

USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION

c/o T. Hoffman
36078 Huntington St.
Millville, DE 19967

Phone: (610) 417-5163

E-mail: ussemmons@gmail.com



USS Emmons (DD457-DMS22)

Visit us online at

www.ussemmons.org



JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP
USS EMMONS REUNION

EMMONS FAMILY REUNION

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

SEPTEMBER 28 - OCTOBER 1

*Come join your Emmons Family as we
celebrate that special bond of friendship,
love & experiences forged by the shipmates.*